

## **Abstract**

**Thesis: Harold Rugg and His Changing Society**

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This study examines the rise and fall of Harold Rugg's famous social studies textbook series by placing it within the context of the Progressive Era, Great Depression, and Second World War. Rugg's attackers used his social reconstructionism, the belief that schools should play an active role in confronting national problems, against him. They claimed that his series was a national threat because it undermined the patriotism that was necessary for the country to survive the Second World War. The thesis encourages historians to consider Rugg's work and its reception as a reflection of the developments in each of these periods. Rugg employed the progressive focus on the problems of industrialization, use of social sciences, and professionalization. His series rose in popularity because it was a response to the economic devastation of the Depression, and it lost support because of the mobilization for the war. It also argues that scholars should give greater attention to the way in which Rugg's critics formulated their arguments, and that scholars should examine his textbooks in greater detail, ideally by comparing them with those of his contemporaries to provide better understandings of Rugg's series. Finally, the thesis argues that educational historians can observe social reconstructionism's reliance on national priorities by showing how Americans turned against Rugg's works because they emphasized foreign threats over internal economic problems as the

Second World War began. Although many factors contributed to the removal of Rugg's texts from American schools including the biases of his attackers, his critics' ability to place his philosophy within the context of the war was critical. While his social reconstructionism was a potential solution to the Great Depression, they argued that it was a liability the nation could not afford during wartime.